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Committee on the Rights of the Child
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Summary record of the 2146th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 21 September 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Mezmur

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Suriname (CRC/C/SUR/3-4; CRC/C/SUR/Q/3-4)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Suriname took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Dogojo** (Suriname), introducing her country's combined third and fourth periodic reports (CRC/C/SUR/3-4), said that, since the consideration of the country's previous periodic report, a Presidential Task Force had been established to maintain coherence between various policies and priorities concerning children. The Presidential Task Force had a mandate to formulate long-term policies, draft action plans, monitor the implementation of the Integral Child and Youth Policy and its related programme of action for the period 2012-2016 and advise the President on any interventions necessary in that regard. The primary aim of the Policy was to guarantee all children living in Suriname optimal protection and opportunities for development so that they could participate fully in an increasingly globalized world. The Policy's areas of focus included early childhood development, vulnerable children, combating violence and opportunities for development. It also paid special attention to gender-related issues and the social inequalities affecting children. A different government ministry was responsible for coordinating activities under each area of focus. The Presidential Task Force and the responsible ministries cooperated closely in monitoring the implementation of the Policy.

3. The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs had been established in 2010 to ensure that due consideration was given to the rights of adolescents in policy implementation. The Ministry was responsible for, inter alia, creating extracurricular opportunities for children and adolescents and facilitating their participation in formulating and monitoring the implementation of the Integral Child and Youth Policy.

4. The youth parliament, which was elected every three years by children and young people aged between 12 and 25, served to foster children and young people's participation in child and youth policy development. In addition, the yearly national youth congress provided children and young people with an opportunity to discuss issues arising from the implementation of the Integral Child and Youth Policy with government representatives.

5. The second National Action Plan for Children for the period 2009-2014 had been evaluated upon its conclusion. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Public Housing was in the process of formulating an action plan on child protection for the period 2017-2022, which would focus on vulnerable children, including children with disabilities.

6. Noteworthy legislative advances included the adoption of legislation on a child's right to be heard, the adoption of amendments to the section of the Penal Code dealing with sexual abuse and exploitation, the adoption of the Domestic Violence Act, the passing of a bill on stalking and a decree on young persons and hazardous work, the adoption of the Law on Care Institutions and the adoption of an amendment to the law on Nationality and Residence in 2014. Furthermore, a bill to set the minimum and maximum age for compulsory education at 4 and 16 years, respectively, was currently before the Council of Ministers, which, if approved, would serve to harmonize the maximum age for compulsory education with the minimum legal age for employment.

7. Now that the necessary amendments had been made to the Penal Code, the Government could begin preparing its initial report under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Government had also taken steps towards ratifying the International

Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138). The Council of State had approved the necessary legislation and submitted it to Parliament for approval.

8. The adoption of a law on care institutions and the creation of the Care Institution Bureau had led to a number of advances in the administration of children's care institutions, including the development of quality standards for care and residential institutions, the setting up of supervisory boards to advise the Minister for Social Affairs and Public Housing and the preparation of initiatives for transferring children from residential institutions to a family setting. The Minister for Social Affairs and Public Housing was empowered to close institutions that failed to comply with the aforementioned quality standards. Although no records had been kept on the number of children living in care institutions prior to 2014, there were estimated to be between 2,000 and 3,000 children living in such institutions. However, there had been a significant decrease in the number of children entering care institutions following the entry into force of the law on care institutions.

9. The Government, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), planned to conduct a study for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the situation of children with disabilities in Suriname and of designing programmes and interventions underpinned by up-to-date disaggregated information that would guarantee the protection of their rights. In most cases, services for children with disabilities were provided by civil society organizations with the financial and technical support of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Public Housing.

10. A number of measures had been taken to guarantee children living in all regions of the country access to education, such as providing school transportation. Regrettably, the considerable investments made to improve the country's infrastructure, particularly in rural and inland areas had proven to be insufficient. The unequal access of the Maroon and indigenous peoples to education and other services could be explained by the fact that they lived in isolated areas in the interior of the country. The Government had undertaken a project to expand schools and classrooms in the capital and other districts and was working with the private sector to review the content of vocational training, including for children with disabilities. The Government also planned to open more special education schools and was in the process of making existing schools more accessible to persons with disabilities.

11. In recent years, important strides had been made towards modernizing the national data collection system, such as the computerization of databases and the installation of surveillance systems in certain sectors. However, despite the progress achieved in that area, ensuring the availability of appropriate qualitative and quantitative disaggregated data remained a challenge. When such data were available, they were not always consistently monitored, analysed or used to inform policy development and implementation.

12. Suriname was suffering from the impact of the declining prices of international commodities, in particular from the extractive industries, and the subsequent dearth of resources with which to meet its development objectives. In the face of that situation, the Government had adopted a recovery and stabilization programme with the financial support of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with the aim of securing sustainable growth and improving the well-being of the population, including children and young people. The recovery and stabilization programme included a conditional cash transfer initiative known as the Programme for the Development of Welfare and Labour, the aim of which was to improve the financial situation of poor households.

13. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** (Country Rapporteur) asked when the State party intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and what progress had been made towards adopting the law on the reception and registration of adopted children, the bill on

emergency care for children, the bill on maternity leave and the bill amending the Civil Code. The delegation should also provide additional information on the objectives of and the human, financial and technical resources allocated to the action plan on child protection for the period 2017-2022.

14. He asked whether the State party judged there to be adequate coordination between the Child Rights Bureau, which was responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Convention, and the Presidential Task Force and government ministries responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Integral Child and Youth Policy and, if not, how it planned to remedy that situation. The delegation should also indicate whether there were plans to allocate more human resources to the Child Rights Bureau and whether the staff of the Bureau received ongoing training.

15. He asked whether the State party had taken any steps towards establishing an independent body to monitor the implementation of the Convention and to receive and investigate complaints submitted by and on behalf of children on violations of their rights that complied with the Paris Principles. It would also be useful to know which body was responsible for collating and processing proposals received from civil society organizations and how often the body in question met with such organizations.

16. The Committee had received reports that children belonging to indigenous and minority groups, including Maroon children, and the children of Haitian migrants often encountered discrimination when attempting to access education and health-care services. He invited the delegation to comment on the veracity of those reports and to describe the strategies that were in place to protect children and adolescents with diverse sexual orientations and who had contracted HIV and/or AIDS against discrimination and violations of their rights. He asked whether the State party had devised guidelines to assist public officials in applying the principle of respect for the best interests of the child and whether that principle was systematically applied by judges when issuing rulings.

17. Notwithstanding the significant improvements made to the national birth registration system in Suriname, the Committee remained concerned that the parents of children born in inland or rural areas and parents who were foreign nationals and/or migrant workers still faced obstacles in registering their children's birth and in obtaining a birth certificate. He asked what measures the State party had adopted to guarantee the parents of those children access to birth registration services and whether there was a special procedure for registering the birth of children born to foreign nationals and/or migrant workers, including those in an irregular situation.

18. The Committee was concerned that the obligation for children to conduct an electoral campaign in order to be elected to the youth parliament precluded children from disadvantaged backgrounds from standing for election. He wished to know how the State party ensured that disadvantaged children and children belonging to vulnerable groups had the opportunity to participate in that forum and how it prevented political parties from manipulating children's electoral campaigns to promote their own agenda. From what age could children participate in the youth parliament? Had the State party considered providing the youth parliament with its own budget so as to guarantee its independence?

19. The delegation should also describe the measures in place to protect children against torture and ill-treatment. He asked whether the State party planned to establish an oversight body responsible for ensuring that children held in pretrial detention were not subjected to torture or ill-treatment. He enquired as to whether the State party planned to extend the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools to cover all other settings in which it was still permitted and whether any campaigns had been undertaken to educate parents and teachers in all regions of the country about the negative impact of corporal punishment.

20. **The Chair** (Country Rapporteur) said that there was still a disparity in the minimum legal age for marriage, which stood at 15 years for girls and 17 years for boys. He asked when the amendments to the Marriage Act, which he understood would remove that disparity, would be adopted and until what age a child wishing to marry had to obtain parental consent. Moreover, the Committee was concerned by the reported persistence in the interior of the country of the erroneous belief that childhood ended with the onset of puberty. He asked what action had been taken to correct that misconception.

21. The delegation should also indicate whether the establishment of local civil registry offices had led to an increase in birth registration and whether the State party planned to ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. He would also appreciate an update on the progress made in setting up the Child Ombuds Bureau as the independent body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention and receiving and investigating complaints submitted by or on behalf of children. He asked whether there were plans to allocate additional staff to the hotline for reporting child abuse, which was currently run by volunteers, and to make it compulsory for professionals working with children to report child abuse.

22. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked whether the Government was planning to introduce educational programmes on children's rights into the school curriculum or to provide the youth parliament with the appropriate resources to ensure the dissemination of the Convention. She also asked how the Government intended to raise awareness of the bill on hearing children in judicial procedures. Noting that the slump in commodity prices was affecting the budget for development and human rights issues, she wondered if Suriname was taking any measures to combat corruption within the Government in order to make more resources available.

23. **Mr. Cardona Llorens**, referring to the issues surrounding resource allocation mentioned in paragraph 33 of the State party's report, asked whether any measures had been taken as a result of the findings of the study on spending on public education. The delegation should indicate whether the Government had improved budgeting or identified how resources were being spent on other public services and also describe the measures taken to ensure the sustainability of public spending on children's issues.

24. Noting that the Government lacked data on child indicators because childcare institutions were not legally obliged to submit such data, he wished to know whether any legislation on childcare institutions had been adopted making the submission of such data mandatory. Lastly, the Committee would welcome information on any legislation or policies in place to minimize the adverse effects of pollution on the health of children living in mining areas.

25. **Mr. Nelson** asked what measures were being adopted to tackle the high rates of incest and sexual abuse and whether there had been any prosecutions or convictions relating to those offences. He also asked whether the Government was conducting any campaigns to raise awareness about incest and sexual abuse; whether social workers, law enforcement officials and prosecutors received training on how to handle cases of sexual abuse; and whether the police had a special unit that dealt specifically with sexual abuse. Since there was only one shelter for sexually abused children in Suriname due to a lack of funding, he asked whether more shelters would be opened in the future and whether the Government had appealed to NGOs, international organizations or private entities for additional funding.

26. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that the delegation should explain the discrepancies between birth registration in urban and rural areas. She observed that at least 3,000 people in Suriname had not been issued with birth certificates and asked what measures the Government was taking to enable those people to obtain them. Was there a deadline for

birth registration and, if so, how could persons who had missed the deadline apply for a birth certificate? Would they have to pay a fine?

27. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro**, noting that Suriname had implemented a recovery and stabilization programme as a result of the economic recession, said that IMF policies were usually based on large-scale macroeconomic indicators and did not take into account the lives of individuals. She therefore asked whether the Government had earmarked funding for services affecting children and adolescents. While she welcomed initiatives such as the youth parliament, she wondered whether the Government was also promoting the participation of young people in decision-making bodies for schools, neighbourhoods and even health services.

The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.

28. **Ms. Dogojo** (Suriname) said that an anti-corruption bill was before parliament. Persons under the age of 18 could not be recruited for the national armed forces, and Suriname was planning to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

29. **Ms. Ferrier** (Suriname) said that birth registration in Suriname was above 90 per cent. Legislation had been amended in 2014 so that all children born in Suriname, including children of migrants, could obtain Surinamese nationality. Moreover, once their birth had been registered, they could obtain medical insurance.

30. As far as the procedure for birth registration was concerned, physicians from medical missions obtained birth registration forms when they visited clinics in the interior of the country and then sent those forms to the relevant office. However, 56 clinics were accessible only by boat or plane and therefore not visited on a regular basis, which led to delays in birth registration. In an attempt to increase birth registration in the interior of the country, clinics had begun offering parents of infants early childhood development kits upon the presentation of their birth registration forms. In the past two years, 5,000 kits had been distributed, primarily in rural areas.

31. Amendments to the Civil Code had not yet been finalized, and there was still a discrepancy between the age of marriage for boys and girls. If a child's parents did not consent to his or her marriage, the child could write to the President to request authorization for the marriage.

32. Juvenile offenders held in prison were visited by psychologists on a weekly basis, as well as by other staff from the Ministry of Justice, and were able to report any ill-treatment during those visits. The Government was trying to prohibit corporal punishment, and civil society organizations were promoting other forms of discipline, but such punishment was deeply rooted in Surinamese culture and therefore difficult to eradicate.

33. National legislation prohibited child abuse, but in some communities the perpetrators were protected by other members of the community and the victims were afraid to speak up. As a result, the Government was conducting awareness-raising campaigns in schools and distributing booklets that encouraged children to report abuse to their teachers or family members. The Government also encouraged physicians to report cases of child abuse. In addition, when cases of child abuse went to trial, the victims were allowed to testify at special hearings so that they would not be confronted with the perpetrator. Lastly, in some areas of Suriname, extended families often lived together as a result of limited housing, which sometimes led to cases of incest.

34. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked whether children were prepped before giving evidence at special hearings, so that they understood what was going to happen and why they had to testify. She also asked whether the judges concerned received training on hearing evidence

from children, particularly children who had been sexually abused. Were physicians who found signs of abuse when examining a child legally bound to report such abuse?

35. **Ms. Ferrier** (Suriname) said that police officers received regular training on how to deal with cases of child abuse and that prosecutors and judges received training on how to speak to children. Although medical students received training on all forms of abuse, physicians were not yet legally obliged to report cases of abuse, as older physicians strongly opposed such initiatives.

36. Not every community had schools because of the low number of children in certain indigenous villages. Children from those villages could still attend school if they travelled to larger communities by boat, but some parents chose to keep their children at home because of the dangers associated with boat transportation. The Ministry of Education was increasing the number of teachers and trying to ensure that children under the age of 4 began learning Dutch. It was also considering providing financial assistance to children who wished to continue their studies at boarding schools in the capital city.

37. **Mr. Soetodirijo** (Suriname) said that the Child Rights Bureau engaged in awareness-raising activities at schools, childcare institutions, civil society organizations and social clubs and was planning further campaigns on the radio and television. The Bureau was also organizing a fair to promote the rights of children on 11 October — the International Day of the Girl Child.

38. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** asked whether there was any coordination between the Presidential Committee for Child and Youth Policy, the Child Rights Bureau and other government agencies to ensure that the Government's policies on children were effectively implemented. While welcoming the visits to youth in detention carried out by officials from the relevant ministries, he wished to know how often those visits were conducted and whether it was within the remit of those officials to lodge a complaint if they saw signs that children were being ill-treated.

39. **Ms. Ferrier** (Suriname) said that, following consultations with government agencies and NGOs, the Presidential Committee for Child and Youth Policy had developed a comprehensive policy to address all issues concerning children and adolescents. It was the first time that such an integrated approach had been adopted. By bringing together representatives of various ministries to operate as a network, policy gaps could be easily identified. The Presidential Committee would report to the President on the outcomes of its work. It acted as a steering committee and, unlike the Child Rights Bureau, was not involved in the implementation of specific activities. There were currently about 50 minors in juvenile detention. They were visited once or twice per week by a child psychologist and a social worker.

40. **Ms. Dogojo** (Suriname) said that two additional positions had been created within the Child Rights Bureau and had been filled by policy officials with high-level training in law and policy development. The staff of the Bureau had received training on the provisions of the Convention. There were plans to seek out additional resources for the Bureau outside of the State budget.

41. **Ms. Brown** (Suriname) said that a new board had been established in August 2016 and was preparing a new policy and action plan for the shelter for sexually abused children. The policy and plan would be presented to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Public Housing within one month. Plans had been made to train staff of childcare institutions to care for child victims of sexual abuse. There were also plans to cluster institutions with similar goals, which would allow for improved monitoring and control.

42. **Ms. Dogojo** (Suriname) said that there was more than one shelter in the country that focused on caring for sexually abused children. Her Government's policy was to provide financial assistance to those childcare institutions that applied for it.

43. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked how institutions assisting child victims of violence were normally funded, if government funding was provided only upon request.

44. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** asked what obstacles were hindering efforts to raise the minimum age of marriage.

45. **The Chair** asked how the concept of adolescence was understood in practice in the State party.

46. **Ms. Sandberg** asked what was being done on the ground to prevent the sexual abuse of children.

47. **Ms. Dogojo** (Suriname) said that her Government provided financial assistance to 57 privately owned childcare institutions to help cover their operating costs. The institutions must first submit a request for funding before the funds could be disbursed.

48. **Ms. Ferrier** (Suriname) said that minors between 10 or 11 and 18 years of age were considered to be adolescents. In the light of the unique challenges faced by persons in that age group, her Government had, for the first time, adopted a special policy for them. That policy was coordinated by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, and community organizations were closely involved in its implementation. The adoption of such a policy was in line with developments in the region, as most Latin American countries already had a policy on adolescents.

49. Part of the reason it was taking so long to adopt a minimum age for marriage was because it was not just the provision on the age of marriage that was being reviewed, but rather the Civil Code as a whole. Not all the different ethnic groups in the country were in agreement about the age at which a person should be treated as an adult, and that made the situation rather complex. The various groups were participating in discussions on the subject, which was a positive development.

50. With regard to the prevention of sexual abuse, children were made aware at a very young age of the importance of being responsible for what happened to their own body. Awareness-raising campaigns about sexual abuse were conducted in schools, and as a result some children did report abuse to their teachers. In the basic education system, there were social workers responsible for handling problems that children experienced in the family environment. The more difficult challenge was that of raising awareness among adults and helping them to understand that any form of child abuse was unacceptable.

51. **Ms. Dogojo** (Suriname) said that the Ministry of Justice and Police had set up a contact bureau as part of a pilot project in a village in the interior of the country. The aim of the project was to encourage members of the community to report violence against children. In response to the success of the project, a contact bureau had also recently been set up in another district, and the results would be analysed with a view to expanding the project nationwide.

52. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that, as he understood it, indigenous and Maroon groups in the interior of the country had little concept of adolescence and believed that children as young as 12 years were ready for marriage. He was therefore concerned that, if the views of the various groups on the subject were taken into account, early and childhood marriages would continue to take place and would be legally recognized.

53. **Mr. Guráň**, while welcoming the active participation of children in the youth parliament at the national level, asked whether they also had opportunities to participate at the regional, community and school levels.

54. **Ms. Dogojo** (Suriname) said that the comments about marriage in Maroon communities did not reflect the reality in Suriname. When a Maroon girl reached puberty and began menstruating, she participated in a ritual ceremony, but that ceremony did not signify that she was ready for marriage. A second ceremony was held when the girl was perhaps 16 or 17 years of age, and only then was she allowed to marry. Those ceremonies were carried out in accordance with the law. The draft Civil Code included a provision establishing the legal age of marriage at 18 years, but it had not yet been approved by parliament.

55. Young people between 15 and 22 years of age could be elected to the national youth parliament. At a more local level, there were also youth district boards and youth school boards in which young people were represented and their views were heard.

56. **Ms. Sandberg** asked whether the Government had reflected on how it might raise awareness among parents about alternative forms of discipline that could replace corporal punishment. Experience in other States had shown that, without a law prohibiting corporal punishment, attitudes and behaviour were much slower to change. She therefore asked whether the Government might consider adopting such legislation.

57. **The Chair** asked what progress had been achieved in enforcing the ministerial decision to prohibit corporal punishment in schools and what challenges the Government still faced in that regard.

58. **Ms. Ferrier** (Suriname) said that, although no legislation had been introduced to ban corporal punishment, teachers found to be perpetrators were punished or even dismissed. Nevertheless, it should be noted that some parents specifically requested teachers to use corporal punishment on their children, which reflected deeply entrenched cultural attitudes. Over the previous 20 years, radio and television programmes had been broadcast and information sessions had been organized to raise awareness of positive parenting, including alternatives to corporal punishment. Children who had been caught stealing were often subjected to corporal punishment twice, once by police officers and a second time by their parents. Many parents were of the view that reasonable chastisement was an appropriate response to misbehaviour.

59. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** said that, given the low rate of breastfeeding in the State party, he wished to know whether the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes had been incorporated into domestic legislation; whether relevant World Health Assembly resolutions had been implemented; and whether breast-milk substitute companies were systematically monitored. He asked whether breastfeeding was promoted through public policy; whether national programmes had been implemented to increase the rate of breastfeeding; and what kind of support was available to mothers who wished to breastfeed. For example, did they have access to breastfeeding counsellors, both in hospitals and at the community level, and other sources of information and assistance? In addition, he wished to know what proportion of hospitals had been certified as baby-friendly under the baby-friendly hospital initiative and would be grateful for information on the provisions for maternity leave.

60. With regard to mental health, he asked whether any measures had been taken to lower the high suicide rate among adolescents and improve their access to psychiatric support and whether schoolteachers were trained to identify the signs of depression. He wished to know what measures had been taken to reduce the large number of adolescent pregnancies, which was linked to the high prevalence of child marriage, in particular in rural areas; whether programmes on sexual and reproductive health had been incorporated into school curricula; whether those programmes included information on the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and adolescent pregnancies; and whether such programmes were conducted in rural areas. He also wished to know whether policies had been

implemented to ensure that adolescents could access contraception without their parents' consent. Lastly, had policies been implemented or planned to provide free health care for pregnant adolescents?

61. **The Chair** asked what measures had been taken to support families, in particular parents from rural areas, with a view to reducing the demand for alternative care and what financial and human resources had been provided to implement the draft framework bill on care institutions. More information would be welcome on the efforts made to improve the safety, hygiene and staff training of day-care centres. In terms of gatekeeping, he wished to know what measures had been adopted to ensure that every child was placed in the most appropriate of the three alternative care settings available. He also wished to know whether children with disabilities were cared for separately from other children. In the light of reports of violence against children in alternative care settings, he asked whether measures had been taken to ensure that staff members underwent a background check and that complaint mechanisms and procedures had been put in place. How were alternative care settings monitored and which body was responsible for conducting monitoring visits?

62. He would be grateful for confirmation that the age range for compulsory education, which was currently 7 to 12 years, would be changed. Furthermore, he asked what efforts had been made to address geographical disparities in educational enrolment, improve the quality of teaching and teacher retention rates, in particular in the interior of the country and at the secondary level. The Committee would appreciate an explanation of the extremely high rate of repetition and information on what measures had been taken to lower it. He enquired whether fees would be introduced for primary education and what measures had been taken to increase preschool attendance.

63. He wished to know whether there were any plans to introduce a comprehensive law on refugees. Additionally, he would be grateful for more information on the resources and training that had been allocated to combat trafficking in persons, any measures taken to prevent that crime, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators, above all in rural areas, and the work of the inter-agency anti-trafficking working group.

64. With regard to child labour, he would appreciate further information on the work of the multidisciplinary committee to address child labour, the measures taken by the Ministry of Labour to combat the problem and the use of child labour in illegal mines. Furthermore, he asked what measures had been put in place to address child sexual exploitation. Lastly, he would be grateful for more details on the minimum age of criminal responsibility, alternatives to sentencing and the disciplinary measures that could be applied to children deprived of their liberty.

65. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** asked whether the State party had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and whether any measures had been taken to encourage prospective foster parents to accept children with disabilities. He wished to know what policies had been implemented to make education truly inclusive for children with disabilities and what measures had been taken to reduce the reportedly high prevalence of violence against such children.

66. He asked what policies had been implemented to combat substance abuse and the high suicide rate among adolescents. He also asked whether efforts were being made to reduce the availability of pesticides, which served as a common method of suicide. In that connection, he wondered whether a university, which had recently conducted a study on the causes of suicide, cooperated with the Government to address the issue.

67. It was possible that the high rate of repetition was due to the lack of proficiency of students and some teachers in Dutch and that it could therefore be reduced by promoting the use of other languages of instruction.

68. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** asked how many children lived in prison with a parent, whether the best interests of children were taken into account in the sentencing of convicted parents and what arrangements were made to ensure that the children of incarcerated parents, including children living in prison with a parent, did not suffer discrimination.

69. **Mr. Gastaud** said that he would be grateful for confirmation that a bill had been prepared to give official recognition to national languages other than Dutch. With regard to education, he asked what measures had been taken to improve the provision of teacher training, since it was possible that deficiencies in that area were the cause of the high dropout rates and rates of school failure. Lastly, he asked whether street children represented a problem in Suriname.

70. **Ms. Aho Assouma** asked whether the State party planned to take robust measures to combat alcohol and drug abuse among children, in terms of both prevention and treatment. She also asked why the rate of adolescent pregnancy was so high among schoolgirls and unmarried girls, since contraceptives were available through the Global Fund. In terms of nutrition, she wished to know what was being done to reduce the rates of malnutrition and obesity among children aged under 5 years. With regard to pregnancy, she wondered whether consideration had been given to the possibility of making an exception to the ban on abortion in the case of rape. On the subject of adolescent pregnancy in particular, she enquired as to whether the national sexual and reproductive policy formulated in 2005 had been adopted and how it was implemented, in particular in schools. Lastly, she wished to know what was being done to ensure that children received sexual and reproductive health education lessons at school.

71. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** asked whether the most recent HIV/AIDS plan, which had covered the period 2007-2013, had been replaced or renewed and what efforts had been made to adjust the strategy adopted. What was being done to combat the prevalence of HIV/AIDS?

72. With regard to poverty, she wished to know whether the conditional cash transfer system was operational and, if so, what its results had been, what conditions had been established in terms of children's education and health and what level of coverage had been achieved. Lastly, she would be grateful for more information on any measures taken to address the disparity in access to water sources and improved sanitation facilities between rural coastal areas and rural interior areas and on the improved water sources mentioned in the State party's report.

73. **The Chair** said that he would be grateful for an update on the proposal to ratify the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, which had been considered as part of the revision of the Civil Code. He would also be grateful if the delegation could comment on the claims made by some school representatives that, if the Government paid its annual contributions on time, it would not be necessary to charge fees for school materials and uniforms. If those claims were accurate, what action would be taken to ensure that annual contributions were paid on time?

74. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that she would welcome more information on the availability of services for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission and antiretroviral drugs.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.